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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAKAR 000774

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, AND INR/AA

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SUBJECT: GUINEA-BISSAU KILLINGS UDPATE, IMPACT ON ELECTIONS

REF: DAKAR 696

Classified By: Ambassador Marcia S. Bernicat for reasons 1.5 B/D

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Following the June 5 killings of Minister of Territorial Administration Baciro Dabo, National Assembly Deputy Helder Proenca and others (reftel), the government of Guinea-Bissau sought to convince skeptical diplomats that those killed were participating in a coup attempt. The government later released evidence suggesting that Proenca tried to enlist armed forces deputy chief of staff Antonio Indjai, who surreptitiously recorded subsequent conversations. The events hurt the candidacy of Malam Bacai Sanha, while apparently buoying Kumba Yala,s prospects. END SUMMARY.

DIPLOMATIC SKEPTICISM

¶2. (C) The government of Guinea-Bissau (GOGB) convoked a meeting of the diplomatic corps, including PolOff, on June 6, 2009, the day after the killings (reftel), to present the official version of events. As Interim President Raimundo Pereira, the Prime Minister and reportedly 22 ministers (including the defense minister) were out of the country when the killings took place, the GOGB was represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Adiata Nandigna, and the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Antonio Oscar Barbosa. The GOGB officials insisted that those killed were involved in a coup plot and were killed while resisting arrest. The GOGB presented no evidence to support this claim. (Note: Subsequently, the GOGB released audio and video recordings that it claims corroborate the existence of a plot. End note.)

¶3. (C) In response, the assembled diplomats expressed their skepticism and frustration with a lack of transparency on the part of the GOGB. The French Ambassador, Jean-Francois Parot, complained that similar meetings with the diplomatic corps were held following an alleged coup attempt in August 2008, the attack on then-President Vieira,s house in November 2008, and the March 2009 assassinations of Vieira and Na Wai, yet the guilty were never held accountable. The French Ambassador voiced the prevailing skepticism about the killings among diplomats and in the streets of Bissau, and bluntly told the GOGB officials that &no one believes you.8

¶4. (C) The head of the European Union,s security sector reform (SSR) mission, General Juan Esteban Verastegui, stressed that European policy makers needed clarity and transparency, which the GOGB has been unable to provide. Verastegui warned that the EU SSR mission could be recalled if the GOGB failed to take steps to end the impunity and to provide credible information about recent events.

15. (C) In response, Barbosa, a lifelong member of the ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), insisted that he initially shared the diplomats, skepticism about the alleged coup plot, but was convinced by the &compelling8 evidence military and Ministry of Interior officials presented to the Council of Ministers on June 5. As the tension in the meeting with the diplomatic corps increased, Nandigna candidly acknowledged that the authority of the GOGB had been usurped by the armed forces. As a minister, Nandigna said, she has a target on her head, and therefore insisted that the members of the GOGB also want the truth and an end to impunity.

THE OFFICIAL VERSION OF WHAT HAPPENED

16. (SBU) On June 9, the GOGB released to the media a more detailed account of what allegedly transpired. According to the official version, former Prime Minister Faustino Imbali (who on June 5 was severely beaten by military personnel when being taken into custody) and Robert Cacheu, director of the presidential campaign of PAIGC candidate Malam Bacai Sanha, hatched a plan to kill acting Armed Forces Chief of Staff Naval Captain Zamora Induta and seize control of the government and military while Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior and interim President Raimundo Pereira were out of the country. Imbali and Cacheu allegedly approached acting Deputy Chief of Staff Colonel Antonio Indjai and asked for his support, while simultaneously recruiting Gomes' political nemesis and former Minister of Defense, National Assembly Deputy Proenca to join the plot. Indjai reportedly agreed, but immediately shared the details of the conspiracy with

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Induta, and military and domestic intelligence. Indjai continued to play along with the plot, encouraging Proenca according to audio and video recordings. During the meeting with the diplomatic corps, the GOGB presented no evidence linking Territorial Administration Minister Dabo in any way to the alleged coup plot, nor did the GOGB attempt to explain why the military instead of the police had conducted the arrests. The armed forces have reportedly issued a list with the names of people suspected of plotting the alleged coup. No further killings or arrests have been made since June 5.

17. (SBU) On June 12, the GOGB released parts of the audio and video recordings to the media. Allegedly due to the fact the audio recordings were collected by holding a tape recorder near a telephone receiver, and the video recordings were done through a camera hidden in a pen, the quality reportedly was very poor. Viewers could not discern faces in the video nor understand the audio. Consequently the GOGB on June 15 released written transcripts of the audio recordings to the media.

DISSENT PUNISHED

18. (C) In the hours following the killings on June 5, State Information Services Director General Antero Correia reportedly was instructed to sign the official Ministry of Interior,s communiqu describing what had transpired. According to Embassy sources, Correia refused to sign what he characterized as a fabrication. Military officials promptly took Correia into custody where he remains, reportedly in poor health. Correia,s deputy, Samba Djalo, signed the communiqu and has assumed the role of acting Director General. (NOTE: Judicial Police Director Lucinda Ahukarie characterized Djalo as the most active drug trafficker within the Ministry of Interior. END NOTE) Imbali, who was allegedly severely beaten, also remains in military custody. Domingos Brosco, a musician who was at Imbali,s residence at the time of his arrest, is also in custody.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

¶9. (SBU) On June 15, some members of Dabo,s campaign committee publicly endorsed Party for Social Renewal (PRS) candidate and former President Kumba Yala. The following day, other members of Dabo,s inner circle endorsed Sanha. The killings and alleged conspiracy, however, dealt a blow to Sanha,s campaign. Campaign Director Cacheu and top advisors and former ministers Marciano Silva Barbeiro and Daniel Gomes -- all named as co-conspirators -- all played key roles in Sanha,s campaign. Sanha has denied any knowledge or involvement in the alleged coup. While he was also originally named as a co-conspirator, independent candidate Joao Cardoso continues to campaign openly. On June 7, independent candidate Pedro Infanda dropped out of the race, citing a lack of security.

¶10. (C) While the campaign of independent candidate Henrique Rosa reportedly languishes, Yala has moved to capitalize on the violence. Yala, who as president was responsible for making the Balanta ethnic group 90 percent of the military's officer corps, has reportedly told Balanta audiences that their group is under attack for allegedly being the perpetrators of the military violence. The fact that Prime Minister Gomes was out of the country when the coup allegedly was to be launched also fueled speculation on the streets of Bissau that Rosa had a hand in the violence. (COMMENT: The popular belief that Gomes was responsible for the March assassinations combined with his government,s failure to pay civil servant salaries has led to a precipitous drop in his popularity. Public dissatisfaction with Gomes has spilled over into frustration with the PAIGC and thus with Sanha. END COMMENT.)

¶12. (C) COMMENT: Reports of Proenca,s involvement in a coup plot are credible, but even if true, cannot justify his summary killing at the hands of the military. More disturbing are the circumstances of Dabo,s death, for whom there is no evidence of involvement in the supposed coup attempt. Dabo,s killing) execution-style in his bed -- was more likely retribution for his suspected involvement in Na Wai's death and/or part of a potential turf battle among those who facilitate narco-trafficking. The ongoing violence, coupled with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, open acknowledgement that the armed forces have subjugated the civilian authorities emphasizes the need to end the impunity

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with which the military and transnational criminals continue to operate. This and the broader challenge of security sector reform to subject the military to civilian control cannot, in Post,s opinion, occur without external assistance to the GOGb. END COMMENT.
BERNICAT